1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Today the empire of Bornu is a Muslim emirate, or kingdom, which forms a subdivision of Bornu Province in the northeastern corner of Nigeria. The emirate covers an area of 24,000 square miles and, according to the 1952 census, has a population of about 1 million people of whom 626,000 are Kanuri—the dominant ethnic group of the kingdom. There are also about 160,000 Fulani and Shuwa who tend their cattle in the area and who carry out a semi-nomadic way of life. Another 225,000 people belong to small pagan groups, from south of the province and the Cameroons, as well as from the Hausa-speaking areas to the west and from the other regions of Nigeria. The emirate also includes about 5000 non-Nigerians, who are from Europe, America, the Near East, and other African countries.

Including the emirate, Bornu Province has approximately 1,600,000 people, 750,000 of whom are Kanuri. Thus many Kanuri live outside the political boundaries of the emirate. Indeed Kanuri can be found in all major cities of northern Nigeria in substantial numbers as well as in the neighboring territories of Chad and Niger. In order to identify the population with a particular territory, however, it is convenient to think of the emirate sub-division of Bornu Province as Bornu, the traditional homeland of the Kanuri kingdom. These are the people who are the subject of this book; they describe themselves as "Kanuri—the people of Bornu." As noted above, outside this entity—of Bornu—there are many other Kanuri, and a political entity, Bornu Province. However, these will be referred to by their full names, while the word "Bornu" will be reserved for the political system, whose present expression, the emirate or kingdom, is continuous with the Bornu of precolonial times. This reflects as well the attitude of the people themselves, who use the term "Bornu" to refer primarily to the emirate rather than the larger area of Bornu Province.

One other point should be kept in mind about the population figures. There has been a more recent Nigerian census since 1952, and although the details are unknown as yet, it is generally accepted that the more recent figures are in the neighborhood of thirty-five to forty-five percent higher than those of 1952. This means that Bornu may actually have nearly 900,000 in population, and Bornu Province may reach as high as two million persons, as of 1966.

The Kanuri of Bornu live spread out over the entire area of the emirate, in 306 named and variously sized settlements, ranging from Maiduguri, the capital, with its 80,000 population, down to tiny hamlets of three or four households. Most of the people, about two-thirds of them, live in 248 named village-units that range in size from 1000 to 5000. About one-quarter of the population, on the other hand, live in eleven cities whose population is 10,000 or over. This statistical information from the census masks an important point, however, for the towns and villages are really area units and each has within its territory, a set of satellite hamlets that often total to more than half the population of the town or village area. It is this pattern that gives to Bornu its "filled-up" quality even though the population density is approximately twenty-five to forty persons per square mile when calculated from the 1952 census figures or perhaps as much as forty to sixty persons per square mile on the basis of more recent counts. Riding out on horseback into the bush one never feels alone; here and there sprinkled in one or two mile intervals in all directions are little hamlets with their surrounding farmlands while more intermittently, perhaps every five or six miles, are the larger towns and villages. Ev-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

361 Everyone knows where the boundaries lie between village areas, or between hamlets and other settlements, and there is plenty of land for expansion and for the wandering cattle nomads who traverse the area annually moving their cattle north and south with the coming and going of the rains.

342 361 The settlements are all made up of walled compounds and within these are the mud-walled houses with conical thatched roofs, or sometimes grass mat walls with thatched roofs. In the northeast of Bornu the people specialize in a bee-hive shaped house of bound thatch which can be picked up and moved and can reach a size of twenty to thirty feet in diameter, although ten to fifteen feet is more common. A compound is almost always rectangular in shape with mud or grass mat walls and internal partitions. There is only one entrance which is often a house with two doors so that there is a shelter at the doorway for people to gather and visit with the household head. The compounds in any settlement are always arranged in a "U"-shape with the open end towards the west and the closed end on the east. The arms of the U then form the north and south sides of the open plaza where all the major events of town take place. Although in very tiny settlements, big cities, or settlements that have lost a great many people, this U-shape is not often easy to discover, it can be seen by simply asking people where they have their central plaza. When this is pointed out, the questioner knows exactly where to look for the house of the senior political leader of the settlement since his household is always at the bottom of the U in the center facing west. Parenthetically, this means that when individuals or groups pray and bow down toward the east in the open plaza, which they often do, they face the doorway of their local political leader's compound.

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241 Around the villages are fields of millet, the major food staple, guinea corn, ground-nuts, the major cash crop, and numerous specialized crops of vegetables or gourds that vary from place to place depending upon local conditions. Almost everybody does a little farming while goods not produced within the household itself are purchased at local weekly markets that dot the countryside in each of the major villages.

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171 In their culture the Kanuri share ideas about religion, social organization, and subsistence patterns with many of the other peoples of the Western Sudan. Even esoteric items such as pre-pubescent boys' hair styles are shared across wide areas of the southern and central Sahara ranging as far away as Morocco. In their patterns of dress—workshirts and long ground-length robes for men, long shirts and saris for women—they again share many items with surrounding peoples as they do in their love of horses which give a man prestige unless he is one of the few in the cities that owns an automobile. Their language, Kanuri, is not related to other languages of Nigeria, but is shared and closely related to a large group of tongues called Central Saharan that ranges from the Tibesti highlands in northern Chad to Bornu in the southwest and the Darfur region in the modern nation of Sudan, in the southeast. It is a graceful language in which the verb comes at the end of the sentence as in Latin and in which there are many polite circumlocutions for saying things diplomatically. Thus if I wish to say a man is untrustworthy, I do not say it outright. Instead I say quietly that he has narrow eyes, which comes from the saying, "A man with narrow eyes has no shame," he lacks proper respect for his obligations to others. There are many greetings which are adjusted to social rank,

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1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Geidam in the north, where another anthropologist, Abraham Rosman, and his wife were working. Discussions with Dr. and Mrs. Rosman helped all of us to see many of the unique features of Kanuri life that stemmed from our particular towns as against more general Kanuri patterns of behavior that were widespread throughout the society. We also became acutely aware of the kinds of variations that could occur across communities as they varied in size, ethnic composition, and quality of the political leadership. At the end of the first field trip, my wife and I spent three months in the capital city of Maiduguri looking at government reports and district notebooks, and acquainting ourselves with many of the special activities that characterize courtly life at the center of the emirate.

In 1964 and again in 1965 I returned to Bornu. On my previous visit the country had been a colonial holding of Great Britain, now it was part of the independent nation of Nigeria. My task in this second visit was to gather statistics on marriage and on divorce rates. But it also gave me a chance to see old friends, and catch up on what had been happening locally since my last visit seven years earlier. Some changes were readily apparent. A large number of deep wells were sunk all over the province, and these now provide enough water for a greatly expanded livestock population. Everywhere the cattle are healthier, fatter, and above all much more in evidence. They block roads and are seen herded in large numbers to and fro wherever one wanders over the countryside. Furthermore the people are less afflicted by parasites because the deep water is uncontaminated, as much of it was not during my first visit. There is now a large modern abattoir and a ground-nut oil refinery in the capital city, and in late 1964 the Nigerian railway finally pushed through to Maiduguri to connect the Bornu capital with Nigeria's national railway system. On the other hand, detailed questions about various traditional practices indicated that there have been few changes at the cultural and social level. At the political level where there were English District Officers and other officials of the regional government, now these posts are filled by Nigerians, generally from other parts of northern Nigeria. However it is for the most part correct to use the present tense in describing Bornu, and when this is not true I will attempt to mention the special circumstances that have brought on the changes.

Magumeri, our home for seventeen months in 1956 and 1957, sits on top of one of the ridges of Bornu, and there is a steep climb onto it from the motor road that travels along the bottom of the ridge for most of the year. During the rains, the road runs along the sandy top of the ridge, to keep clear of the large muddy areas formed at the ridge bottom. Magumeri includes approximately 2000 people about half of whom live in surrounding hamlets within the boundaries of the village area. It is a district capital and thus has a two-room primary school, a court house, and the large compound of the district head who administers twenty-one village areas, containing 50,000 people, living in an area of approximately 850 square miles. The village has a weekly market on Sunday, and is divided up into a number of wards under the village area head who is also the political leader of its surrounding hamlets and officially the political subordinate of the district head. Except for the fact that it has a somewhat lower proportion of non-Kanuri compared to most others, Magumeri is a "typical" Bornu village in terms of its size, occupational ranges of the population, and influences it receives from the capital and the world beyond the emirate. Indeed this is why I chose to spend most of my time

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By the time the big lord living in the capital would have appointed several representatives to this particular fief because it had grown so big. Such fiefs were the ones most likely to fall prey to sub-division at the death of a king and appointment of a new one. For at this time the incoming monarch had to reward his chief supporters with grants of new fiefs.

As in the pre-nineteenth century the political hierarchy served as an appeal court system, and at the very top of the local fief hierarchy the junior lords shared adjudication with the most senior local leader whatever his rank. Usually these very senior political leaders of the fief had koranic scholars, or mallams, who gave legal advice. Serious cases such as homicide were referred immediately to the capital.

The other variety of fief, that based on birth into a particular group, or *jili* is less well understood. The word "jili" refers to variety or kind. The people speak of this or that jili of soil, or tree, or person. In using it to refer to a person they give his territorial or settlement background, or ethnic group, or his clan grouping if this differs from his territorial classification. Thus a person can have several jili —ethnic, territorial, or clan. Even patrilineal lineage affiliation can be described under this term. Nomadic groups in Bornu were represented as jili in the Shehu's court by a big lord of the jili (chima kura jilibe); this man was, in effect, the fief-holder responsible for the nomad group. Sometimes he was a leader of the group itself, and at other times he was a trusted Kanuri follower of the monarch. In both cases the big lord of the jili administered the group through his own representative in the group who was, unlike the territorial grouping, the local leader of a nomad clan, or a sub-tribe. Sometimes entire tribal groupings came under one jurisdiction, and at other times or in other sections of the state the tribe would be broken down into subsections based on clan groupings with one or more clans under a single fief-holder or big lord of the jili.

This double fief system allowed the nineteenth-century Bornu government the organizational means of administering both the settled and nomadic populations of Bornu. It also did something else very important, for it allowed the government effective control over the population even when natural disasters such as outbreaks of disease or sudden invasions sent the people into flight. If a large set of settlements had grown up in one territory from an original one, and this area was then beset by some disaster, which made the people flee in several directions, they were still thought of as a jili or a single variety of persons. They were still organized under their old lords, and their old leaders still retained over them some powers of taxation and demands of loyalty. If the entire kingdom was in an uproar —as it was during the Fulani wars at the beginning of the century with people fleeing in all directions—then old leaders, or former leaders, could muster their scattered followers as jili, and the political integration of the kingdom remained intact and viable until new settlements stabilized locally, and the territorial-based fief system could re-assert itself.

Complicating the system was the settlement of groups with fiefs through permission granted by the big lord in the capital. He could be approached by the leaders of a group of craftsmen, or kinsmen, or people of the same ethnic extraction, who requested of him that they be allowed to settle in one of his fiefs. In this case, the special group was directly under the jurisdiction of the lord through his local administrator, the junior lord, who dealt with their headman. In later generations,

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

In later generations they often became a separate fief, or in some cases were absorbed into the territorial organization of the original fief. Again, the big lord might also settle some of his slaves in the fief, or he might ask to settle them in someone else's fief, or be asked by some other high ranking person if he would allow slaves to be settled in one of his own fiefs. Slaves delivered the results of their work on the land, and in craftwork directly to their own master whether this was the big lord of the fief or not. If they were in someone else's fief, presents were sent by their master to the senior fief-holder—the big lord—in the capital. It was also possible for the monarch or the big lord to settle holy men, men learned in the Koran, on a fief and such settlements were generally tax free.

There were two main taxes and innumerable smaller ones. Indeed, in the Kanuri language it is possible to denote the meaning of taxation, a tax on something, by simply adding the suffix "ram" to the activity or the object. Of the two main annual taxes, collected after the harvest, one went to the fief-holder and the other to the Shehu. The big lord collected tax on the basis of assessment of local produce by a special tax messenger who went out to the fief and after conferring with local leaders agreed on the tax. All who cooperated in tax collection kept some for themselves, passing surpluses on up the hierarchy to the big lord. In turn the fief-holder always gave gifts to the ruler upon receipt of their own fief-holder tax. Each year the Shehu appointed his own tax messengers from among the nobility and collected a royal tithe from the various fiefs. These men might and might not be fief-holders in their own right, but very often they were not collecting in their own fiefs. Other taxes were annual fees to local headmen, fees for clearing new land, for using new market space, for adjudication, for craftwork, for irrigation (where present), for extending any kind of privilege, etc. The system was essentially the same for the nomad groups, but one related complication should be noted. The people from dispersed localities owed some small taxation privileges to their previous headmen, even though they now lived in new settlements within new fiefs and were required to pay major taxes to their new settlement leaders.

One final point about the pre-colonial political system should be made. To understand such a kingdom it is necessary to keep distinct at all times the concept of a title from that of an office. The Kanuri kingdom had great rosters of noble titles that through time varied in number, numbers of holders per title, and the name of title. Some pre-nineteenth century titles such as the *Fufuma* or lord of the ancient capital city of Birni Ngazargamo dropped out of use. There were a number of men entitled Shettima while there was only one Digma or one Yerima. The titles are honorific, and even personal names which were attached to originally powerful households have become titles during Bornu's long history. Titles embellish a man' political duties, and even provide some opportunities for furthering his ambitions if their past history, or the activities of a title holder, enable him to manipulate the situation successfully for his own advancement. Offices on the other hand are positions in government giving the incumbent rights, duties, and obligations. An office may almost completely coincide with the title, as in the case of the ancient monarch whose title was Mai for probably a thousand years, and Shehu for the last century and a half. Or again offices can vary independently of titles. Thus the title of Digma which was held by a man with many official duties and much power in the mid-nineteenth century had changed by the end of the century, and the man

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

and then bring me the profits whether or not they had crops growing and whether or not they had labor to carry on the cultivation. If I asked them what would happen to their farm they showed little concern and said merely that they farm because they can do nothing else. The implication is that if they had anything better to do they would stop farming immediately.

Land for agriculture is not scarce in Bornu and all settlements except the capital city have plenty of free or unused land within their boundaries. Adjacent to a Kanuri village or hamlet are the farm plots of long-term members of the settlement and their descendants who have inherited these "house-farms" as they are called in Kanuri because they represent land attached to households. These plots are always bounded and often fertilized by the village sheep and goats. In Magumeri house-farms extend in a circle around the village for a radius of about three quarters of a mile. Outside this circle are isolated farm plots dotted here and there and free land as well as pasture land. Ownership is obtained by clearing such land after having registered this intent with the village head, by inheriting a plot, or by having been given it by the previous owner. The Kanuri see house-farm land as symbolizing long-term and stable association with a village or city, while bush farms, although everyone has a few such plots, mean transience or newness because the household head who farms only these does not yet have any farm plots identified with his compound so that people can say, "There is Modu's house, his house-farms are in such-and-such a spot." Instead they say, "That is Modu, he has moved into so-and-so's house or built a house near so-and-so, and has cleared a few new farm plots a mile or two to the south of town."

An interesting and yet difficult question is that of land ownership. The way in which land is owned can be seen in those practices associated with acquisition and transfer. Anyone can clear new land or land that has been unclaimed for many years. He should report this to his local political leader whose permission is always granted if there are no known claims on the property. Again a man may go to the local political leader and ask where he can farm; he is then directed to available plots on the advice of the leader. Or land may be inherited, usually in the male line, or acquired as a gift from a friend, or it can even be sold. Political leaders sometimes try to exert themselves in being party to all land transfers so that their permission becomes part of the transaction, and they feel they have a legitimate right to do so when the previous owner has used the land for a short period. The difficulty here is that there is no definite rule to tell the Kanuri how long a man should use a piece of land during his own lifetime before he has a total right to transfer it to anyone else. On the other hand, they believe that once land has been inherited it is the property of the family, and decisions about its use and transfer are primarily in the hands of the owners. In practice the Kanuri always hold land because they are using it, having cleared it, inherited it, or come to some agreement over it with the previous owner. In the latter case this could mean anything from an outright sale, practiced more near the larger cities, to an agreement over it with the user who gives the previous owner some percentage of the crop. The system works well when household heads as land owners and users have good working relations with their local political leaders. If this is not the case, then political leaders often insist on helping to make decisions about the land and its ultimate transfer whether it has been held for a short time or a much longer one. I have seen or

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ried he must decide where he will set up a house. There are three possible alternatives: (a) he can bring his wife into the house of his father or older brother, or patron whoever the superior man might be; (b) he can set up his own compound close by; or (c) he can move further away and become independent or subordinate to someone else. The decision depends upon whether or not the young man is benefiting from the previous relationship, in which case he usually stays in or near the original compound, or whether he believes himself to be suffering from it, in which case he moves or tries to move away, or near to someone more powerful, influential, and economically beneficent with whom he can associate. The decision is often a very complicated one because myriads of other factors enter into it. Thus if there is a large age discrepancy between a younger man and his older brother, and the father is dead, the younger one may feel that his older brother will never treat him as a man but always as a "young boy." Or if there are brothers and some are full (same mother, same father) while some are half (only one parent in common) then the half brothers are less close and are usually linked to different groups of people through their mothers. One young man told me confidentially that he was worried about whether his father would continue to be successful and whether he should not try to use some of his father's powerful connections in Bornu to become the client of a more important person whose position was even more impressive and more secure than that of his own parents. On the other hand many people would speak about leaving home and setting up households on their own or under influential men and never seem to get around to doing it. When asked about this they replied that this was their home, these were their relatives, and whether it was beneficial or not they ought to stay with their kinsfolk. For them blood is thicker than water, that is to say, they feel their roots in a kinship unit must be the eventual determinant of where they spend their lives.

It is these processes of household growth, and associations between households, that underlie the formation of small-scale political units in Kanuri society. The process can best be seen by observing a real life situation. About three miles southwest of Magumeri is the small hamlet of Gworongo (population circa 250–300) which falls within the boundaries of Magumeri village area. Surrounding the hamlet are small bramble-fenced plots of a special crop called *gworongo* which gives the hamlet its name. This plant is used by women as a stimulant and cosmetic along with tobacco flowers. In 1953 one of these farmers, a man named Aji, moved out of the hamlet and set up a compound near his plots of gworongo. He says he wished to be closer to his fields; others gossiped that he had quarreled with the hamlet head of Gworongo over taxes. With him moved his two wives, a younger brother, and the latter's wife, and two unmarried sons. One of these sons left about a year later to go and live in Maiduguri with his father's younger brother. The other son married in 1957 and brought his wife to live in the compound near his father. A stranger to Gworongo hamlet arrived in 1954 and cut a bush farm for himself about one mile to the north of the settlement. He had no wife at the time and asked Aji if he could build a hut near the new settlement and take his meals in Aji's compound. For this hospitality he helped Aji on the *gworongo* plots, prepared household fences, and sometimes gathered grass for Aji's horse. He has since married with both a loan and some gifts from Aji and is now a settled member of the new "community-in-the-becoming." He says that Aji is his *abba njima*, and he is a tada njima or client of the settlement head.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

general, the Shehu must feel he has gained a loyal supporter and any suspicion to the contrary would bar an eligible contender from the position. The same applies in the case of members of the Shehu's council and especially its chairman, the Wazziri. People say that would-be applicants give gifts, attempt to link themselves by marriage, and in general ingratiate themselves with the Shehu and his councilors who play the major part in such decisions; however such things are not easy to observe directly. On the other hand several people have told me that they regularly visit influential men in the city bringing gifts of cash and foodstuff and generally paying their respects to these men in the hopes that one day when a proper vacancy occurs, they will obtain the office of lawan. In other words this traditional mode of soliciting an appointment is admitted to for the office of lawan.

In the district capital the district head's house is always at the east end of the town plaza and is the most impressive compound in the village. The compound is regarded as emirate property and can only be used while the incumbent is in office after which time he must move out. In addition each district head has his own compound in the royal ward of Maiduguri in the capital with a residing chief subordinate (*wakil*) who appears at official state functions in the Shehu's court to represent his superior. In his rural area the district head has a large group of followers who live in his own compound and the surrounding vicinity. These men form a group of linked households under their leader, the chief follower of the district head who serves as his deputy in the latter's absence. In Magumeri a few of these followers have been recruited during their own lifetime, but most of them are the sons of men who have always been followers of this district head and his father before him.

At first glance these followers are indistinguishable from ordinary peasants, except for the fact that some of them have expensive looking horses given to them by the district head. They help collect nomad cattle taxes, run messages for the district head, and never fail to ride in honor of their leader on special ceremonial occasions or when an important visitor has come to town. Most important they must be willing to leave town or move to another place whenever their superior is stationed elsewhere, while peasants are most often linked by social relations with a particular spot. These men have only one allegiance—that of subordination, discipline and respect to their superior, the district head. Thus they are never fully trusted by the more permanent local residents. Indeed younger members of the district head's following are often feared as well as mistrusted. They have no farms, no wives, and no households of their own. They talk, play cards, drink, look for amorous experiences in the local area, and are felt to be spies for the district head. When such men approach a group of peasant menfolk, the conversation suddenly stops, then slowly begins again on a note of pleasant but iridescent chit-chat in which nothing really serious or informative about local affairs is ever mentioned. Although the hierarchy of lawan and bullama under a district head is his official administrative organization in the district, his followers form an unofficial organization to execute his policies. Unlike the lawan and bullama they are totally dependent upon him for support and status in the society. In return they give him the prestige that comes from having a large retinue of followers. They also organize his tax collections, act as messengers, and sometimes they are even used to discipline lawans who are not complying with administration demands. Thus one lawan complained to a district head that he could not raise the tax assessment for his vil-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

which he hopes are less important. Furthermore, as in any bureaucracy, standards and their enforcement change through time, often as a result of changing personnel at the top. A new council member may have become interested in school latrines and suddenly start forcing compliance with the rules about such things. Failure to do so or to hear about the stringency with which the old previously unimportant policies are now being enforced could bring trouble to the district head who failed to comply. This is why information about policy and the cultivation of powerful friends in the central government is so important for the district head.

Before leaving the rural area a word should be said about adjudication. All leaders in the Bornu political system adjudicate disputes, and the political hierarchy itself serves as an appeals court system. Thus a peasant can take his dispute with a neighbor to his bullama (hamlet or ward head), who may decide to take the case up to the lawan (village area head), who in turn may decide to take the case to the district head. The district head may further decide to send the case over to the district court, and, if necessary, the district court can send the case into the capital city, to the court of the chief alkali of Bornu (chief judge's court). People can go directly to the judge's or district court, and in the city many do. Even with very serious cases like murder which must go into the central court in the city, the people taking the murderer into the city court most often go up the political hierarchy reporting the case each time they see another official even though there is no adjudication, thus giving recognition to their political leaders rather than going directly to a higher court.

Cases are tried by a combination of Muslim law and local custom. The chief or judge listens to the case, and if three witnesses swear for one side in a dispute but not the other, then the side whose witness has sworn wins the case. If no one swears evidence or too many people swear on both sides, then the judge listens while his assistant in the court interrogates the parties involved. The judge, whoever he may be, then makes a decision. Very often the interrogation itself tends to move the evidence towards one side in a dispute or another. Usually if a crowd gathers, one can see by simply listening to the crowd which side of the court case is winning the argument. On the whole decisions are just unless there have been previous and difficult relations between the adjudicator and any of the parties concerned. Swearing evidence in a court is called "eating the Koran"; that is to say, a person must swear on the holy book. If he tells a lie, it is believed that his hand will shrivel and he will die of horrible diseases. This belief is widespread and it is genuinely feared that the traditionally implied consequences of lying in court are in fact quite true.

The Organization at the Center

In Maiduguri at the eastern end of the royal plaza is the palace of the Shehu, flanked on one side by the mosque and on the other by the official residence of the Waziri or chief minister of the emirate. The Shehu is the formal head of government. All measures, policies, appointments, made within the state are in his name; titles are granted at official investiture ceremonies carried on in the royal palace and he is the formal leader of the religious community of the state. This is em-

178 added feature that large sums of money must be distributed when
565 a man receives a title. Thus changes in the meaning and value
554 of noble titles have accompanied the changing position of the
431 aristocracy in the social structure of Kanuri society.

5. Material Changes.

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494 A number of material changes have been introduced which have also had important ramifications. The first of these is the communications system. Nowadays trucks go everywhere, carrying people and produce, tying remote towns to the cities, fostering trade, and allowing a much greater amount of individual mobility than existed in former times. Often the trucks pioneered the roads, beating down the bush in order to reach a village and carry out the peanuts, and thereby creating a
[653] road which would later be maintained as such. The roads are maintained by the Provincial Public Works Department, under a
178
312 Provincial Engineer. The Public Works Department is also in
[603] charge of rural water supply which is responsible for the digging of new wells. Since the productivity of the region is a
[361] function of available water, the digging of new wells has led to the founding of new villages in sparsely populated areas. A secure and good year-round water supply is necessary for a thriv-
[563] ing village. In addition, Fulani herdsmen, always an asset to
[651] the local economy and a good source for local taxation, will be
178 attracted to new watering places for their cattle. Trucks, roads, and wells have had important effects on the way of life

161 has been declining in the present century. The Kanuri Empire
[175] had suffered final defeat at the hands of Rabeh's invading forces in 1890, and the countryside had been ravaged in the
[164] succeeding decade. Venereal disease appears to have spread
[842] widely throughout the population leaving in its wake a marked decline in fertility and a resultant decrease in numbers of
311 the Kanuri population. There is consequently little pressure
[137] for land to farm. Large stretches of brush country are unworked, and the denser sections, along old water-courses, are
136 veritable jungles of brush and thorn. Larger wild-life have long since disappeared from Bornu, forced out by many centuries of human occupation, but some of the denser section of thicket might well support them today. A small herd of elephants is reported around Gumsa, in Geidam District, and of course elephants can be found in the extensive marshes along Lake Chad, but by and large the only game one sees are gazelle, monkeys, and birds, including occasional ostriches.

361 The Kanuri are a sedentary, agricultural people, who live in villages and towns. The fields which they farm encircle their villages. They are never found living in dispersed home-
369 steads. A basic division exists between Kanuri village life and Kanuri life in the towns and cities. This division corresponds to the classic distinctions between folk and urban polar extremes. Urban life was present in pre-contact Kanuri culture
[162] and consequently is well integrated into Kanuri culture. In fact, the Kanuri cities of the eighteenth century were unques-

369 tionably larger than anything found in Bornu today. However,
162 as in all pre-industrial societies, the bulk of the population is engaged in agriculture and lives in the many small villages dotting the plain.

• 361 One can never travel far in Bornu without encountering a
[491] village. Major villages are linked to one another and to towns
[487] by laterite roads. Tiny villages are linked by a network of paths and tracks to one another. Surrounding each village
423 are the fields farmed by each family. Farm land can be had
425 by clearing the brush and making a plot ready for farming.
241 Since this is so easily done, land and its inheritance are not important determinants of the social structure. In theory,
[776] all land belongs to Allah and is in the hands of the Shehu of
[643] Bornu, the political and religious head of all Kanuri. The Shehu distributed large fiefs to Kanuri lords who gave the land to the village heads for distribution to individual villagers. In practice, any newcomer to a village has only to ask the village head for permission to farm and suitable land will be given to him which he must, of course, clear for planting. It naturally happens that those most recently arrived in a village will be given fields furthest from the houses, so that it is obvious that certain fields are more desirable than others. In a town of some size this becomes important. Distant fields may be up to three miles beyond the edge of town, and walking out and back each day to plant or to harvest is a demanding task.
241 Farm land, however, is never bought and sold. In the city this
425
[178]

342 This is one of two house types which the Kanuri build, and is predominant in the villages. There are several variants of this house type. The walls may be of mud bricks, or they may be of
363 woven mats. The first is of course more permanent. Paths separate groups of compounds, and larger streets divide the village. Trees are allowed to grow within the village to provide
361 shade, but other vegetation is removed. Since Bornu is a flat plain, the huts of the small villages, amid the shade trees, jut out from the surrounding cleared landscape in dry season and are visible from a distance.

632 [366] The towns are market centers, and frequently also administrative centers. Towns of some size are divided into wards, and each ward will have its own Lowan. The wards (nouro) are
632 in turn made up of compounds. In the towns, stratification in
565 the social structure is pronounced and wealth differences be-
556 tween heads of families may be great. This is reflected in size
342 of compound and in house type. While the house type and compound of the poor commoner (talaka) in the town may be identical with that of the typical villager (compound walls made of sogdis enclosing a plot on which is built a single round-walled, thatched hut), the compounds of wealthy and important men are enclosed in walls of mud bricks some ten feet high, and the single entrance (chinna) may be framed in an impressive archway. The area of the compounds of important men may be several thousand square yards, and there may be upwards of twenty houses within. The predominant house type of the wealthy man in the

632 565 342 556 town is a square flat-roofed house built entirely of mud bricks, with an adobe veneer and turreted roof decoration.

• 361 Blocks of contiguous compounds, with their entrance-ways facing out onto the streets, make up clusters which are similar to a city block. Streets are laid out on a grid pattern, [363] [492] some narrow and others wide thoroughfares. There is little vehicular traffic, but there is a fair amount of traffic made up of camels and donkeys used as pack animals, and men on horses.

632 [563] Wards may have different characters, especially in large towns with non-Kanuri populations, where different ethnic groups will all cluster in one ward. Wards are also often sub-divided [463] into neighborhoods. These take their character from a particular type of craft localized in a neighborhood, or a single group of tradesmen dealing in the same commodity whose compounds are found located in one neighborhood.

632 361 Every Kanuri town is built around a central plaza called the dandal. The dandal is a cleared area running east to west, faced with compounds and various public buildings on its north and south sides. The western border is frequently open. At the eastern end, with the dandal stretching out before it, is the entranceway to the compound of the Lowan or Ajia, the focal point of a Kanuri town. The entranceway of the Lowan or Ajia's [344] compound always faces west, into the setting sun. The palace of the Shehu in Maiduguri (the Shehuri) fronts on the great dandal; at its far end is one of the gates of the city.

000 Two other foci of the Kanuri town are the market-place and

[GEIDAM]

133 desert-like as one moves north from Geidam. The population to
[137] the north of Geidam continues to be Kanuri (or Manga), but its
[162] density declines rapidly as one moves directly north. Geidam lies on the Yobe River, usually referred to as the Komadugu Yobe River, a redundancy since komadugu means river in the Kanuri language. The Yobe is a slowly moving stream that empties into Lake Chad, approximately 100 miles east of Geidam. Many streams and rivers of the north flow for some months after the rains and then dry up completely. The Yobe, however, is large enough to continue to flow the year round. Before the rains it is reduced to a stream thirty or forty feet in width; after the rains the river reaches its flood crest, when it may extend over half a
[505] mile in width. Though one could travel from Geidam to Lake Chad on the Yobe River, the Kanuri do not use the river for travel or
[172] for commerce. Along the Yobe river, some twenty miles east of Geidam, lie the ruins of Birni Ngazargamo, the ancient capital of the Mais which was sacked by the Fulani. Hence Geidam is not
[56] far from the old center of empire. Along the river, and still further on, along the shores of Lake Chad, are numerous villages and towns.

131 The geographic location of Geidam, aside from the drier
[134] sandy nature of the land because of its northern location, is significant because of its situation in relation to Maiduguri,
131 the provincial capital, and to Nguru, the rail-head. Maiduguri,
633 in the center of the province (see Figure 2), is important both
491 because it is the administrative and commercial capital and be-

2:Rosman E-5 (1956-1957) 1966 MS14 Kanuri MS14

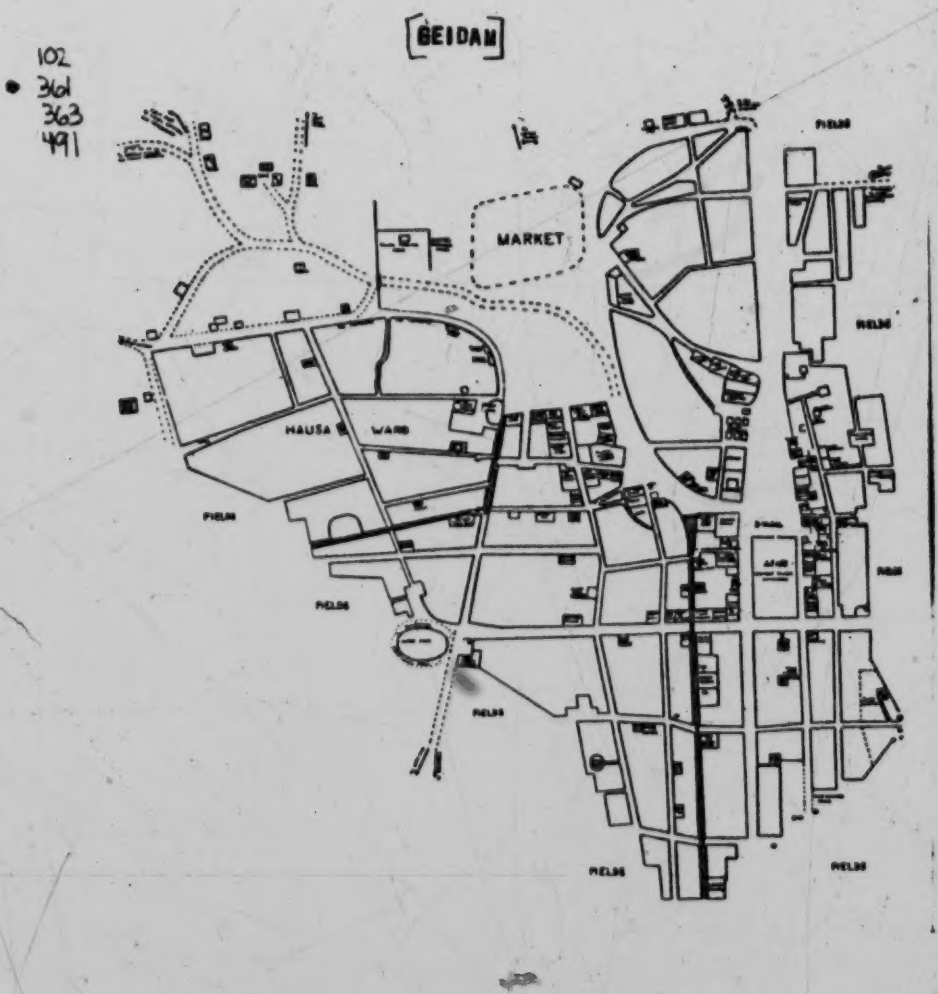

Figure 3 - Map of the town of Geidam.

[GEIDAM]

491 dam with other towns first skirts the several canteens of the
[366] European trading companies as it enters the town, proceeds
across a wide open area of a mile until it reaches the town
• 361 proper, and terminates in a parking area. The town itself has
no wall, and no sharp boundary line marks its outer edges. In
three directions, south, east, and north, the town is bounded
by fields of millet, which begin immediately after the outlying
compounds end. To the west of the town lies the river Yobe,
but a strip of land about half a mile in width separates the
[249] river from the edges of the town. In that area are to be found
[134] garden plots, since the land along the river is particularly
[36] fertile, and, closer to the town, stock yards, the slaughtering
[233] area, and the cattle market, with its pens. Northwest of the
town is the tiny adjoining village of Koldi.

361 Southwest of the town, and south of the cattle market, is
648 the Government Reserve Area, a section of land reserved by the
colonial administration in every sizeable town and city where
Europeans are supposed to reside. It is physically set apart
from the African town. In this case, the sole government build-
ing is the Touring Rest house, over a mile from the town, high
on the banks overlooking the Yobe River. Another larger house,
remnant of a time when an army unit was stationed here years
ago, was rebuilt during the course of the year, and occupied
by the Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir James Robertson, during
a brief stay in Geidam. The Government Rest House is occupied
by British administrative officials in their tours of inspection

[GEIDAM]

361 648 through the district. There are no European officials permanently stationed in Geidam, though a young Assistant District Officer on his first tour of duty did spend three months in Geidam [366] in the course of the author's year of residence there. Along with the Government Rest House, the Government Reserve Area includes the canteens of the various European trading companies who have offices in Geidam, and the houses of their managers. 361 177 [439] There are six trading companies doing business in Geidam, three under the management of Europeans, and three under African managers. The three Europeans, two Cypriotes and one Greek (formerly a Swiss, then replaced by a Greek), represent the entire White population of Geidam. Two operate branch offices of larger companies; one is in business for himself. The three African managers are in charge of branches of large trading companies, two British (United Africa Company and John Holt) and one French company (Société de la Compagnie de Ouest Afrique). Thus, the small European population of the town, and the agents of the Western world who make their presence most felt, the colonial administration and the trading companies, are physically removed from the people of Geidam. They come periodically to do what they must in the town, and return to their own sections, and people of the town go out to them to deal with them. There is no opportunity for continual, indiscriminate interaction between [114] the Kanuri populace and these agents of the Western world. In order to do anthropological field work in such a situation, it became immediately apparent that it would be necessary to live

2:Rosman E-5 (1956-1957) 1966 MS14 Kanuri MS14

[GEIDAM]

114 •361 177 in the town proper, in a Kanuri house, since it was obviously impossible to live as all other Europeans did, more than a mile from the Kanuri people, surrounded by fellow White men.

1. Foci of Communal activity.

36 If an archeologist living centuries in the future were to excavate the ruins of Geidam, he would be able to establish from the physical characteristics of the community that this was undoubtedly an urban community, provided that he excavated with great care. He would find a large area, the market-place, devoted to trade; specialized structures devoted to religious activity, in particular the large central mosque; and others devoted to the government bureaucracy, the largest of these being the Ajari, the 'palace' of the District Head. In addition, he would note great differences in the size of dwelling places or compounds, and would infer that households varied widely in size; [463] this would imply social stratification. Lastly, there would be revealed economic specialization in different sections of the town, indicating the presence of specialized craftsmen. On the basis of solely physical evidence, Geidam would be considered an urban community.

This view is strengthened considerably if one looks at the activities of the people of Geidam. However, as we are still concerned with the physical nature of the community, let us first examine the activities of the townspeople in relation to the various sections of the town, which serve as foci of communal activity.

[GEIDAM]

366 The Geidam market-place represents one such focus of communal activity. It is an area 186 yards by 150 yards, with rows of permanent stalls made of grass mats, and occasional trees.

443 People are present in the market every day, buying and selling, but these are few in number and are limited largely to sellers of food staples. Wednesday is market day in Geidam, and on that day, thousands of people crowd the paths and the stalls, chatting, bargaining, buying and selling. People come into Geidam from a radius of ten to fifteen miles to attend the Wednesday market; and literally everyone in the town visits the marketplace on market day at some point during the day.

• 361 632 As was mentioned earlier, every Kanuri town is built in a "U" pattern around an open plaza, the dandal. The over-all U-pattern is still apparent in Geidam, but since Geidam is a large town whose growth has been uneven, expansion has destroyed the [634] symmetry of the physical plan of the town. The dandal is still very much in evidence, and at its eastern face is the Ajari, the [351] compound of the District Head (Ajia) of Geidam. The dandal leads directly to the gate, or chinna of his compound, which forms a second important focus of communal activity. Much administrative activity occurs in the cleared area before the chinna of the [527] Ajia's compound. In addition, much ceremonial activity, involving displays of horsemanship by the men serving under the Ajia, [526] takes place before the chinna of his house. Many forms of recre- [535] ation, dancing and wrestling, are also held at the head of the dandal, while multitudes of townspeople gather along the borders of the dandal to watch.

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3x Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 M814 Kanuri M814 ●
Nigeria FF1 :28

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144 southern Nigerians. The comparatively high frequency of Rho (cDe) chromosome, characteristic of other African populations south of the Sahara, is also present among the Kanuri. (1)

• 361
162 The Kanuri are sedentary agriculturalists and live in various sized settlements scattered homogeneously throughout the Emirate. In their language they distinguish three kinds of settlements primarily on the basis of size. The largest category, birni (city) refers to centers of population containing 12,000 to 15,000 and over. Besides Maiguguri, the capital, there are only two or three other centers of such large proportion. Villages (bàla) form the most numerous category and vary in population from a few hundred to about ten thousand. The last category, hamlets (bèladea), contain from fifteen to twenty up to several hundred. For political purposes and the gathering of national census data hamlets are lumped in with villages and called village areas. This makes it difficult to tell from census data what proportion of the population of these village areas live in the village itself as compared with the number living in the surrounding hamlets within the boundaries of the village area. Village area tax rolls from one district (Magumeri) indicate that about one-half the population listed for any village area actually live in hamlets around the village included in its jurisdictional area.

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361 At first sight the Bornu countryside appears to be quite thickly populated. When travelling through the bush on horseback or truck, settlements and their encircling farms follow one another after intervals of bushland with unending regularity. This first impression is misleading however for most of the area is uncultivated, unpopulated bushland and the population density is only forty to sixty per square mile. This conclusion

(1) Chalmers J.N.M. and others; TES ABO, MNS and Rh Blood Groups of the Nigerians, Eugenics (London) 17, 3, 168-176, 1953.

101
103 The locality within the Emirate in which concentrated field work has been carried out is Magumeri situated about thirty-five miles northwest of Maiduguri on a motor road. Magumeri is the name of
162 both the district and its capital town. The area has a much higher
634 proportion of Kanuri than the Emirate in general. In Magumeri district ninety-six per cent of the population are Kanuri while this is true of only sixty-two per cent in the Emirate as a whole.

162 The district contains 52,000 people (1952) and has an area
634 of approximately four hundred square miles. Within its boundaries
632 there are sixteen village area units including the Magumeri village area. This village area has a population of 4,200 of which roughly 2,000 live in the village proper and 2,200 live in hamlets within the village area.

When compared to other rural district capitals in the Emirate, Magumeri village area is slightly smaller than the average. Excluding the two large cities of Nguru and Maiduguri, the population range for district capitals varies from 1,400 to 11,000, and the average is 5,100 persons. Seven district capitals are smaller and eleven are
[166] larger than Magumeri village area. It is reported by long term residents to have been a much larger village at one time but to have been losing population steadily over the past twenty years to Maiduguri.

♦361
621 Like all other Kanuri settlements, Magumeri is built in a U shape around a central plaza (dandal) open at the west end with the house of the highest ranking person at the east end facing west. Lesser political leaders in the village have their own smaller plazas, again
366 with their houses at the east end facing west. Another feature common to all Kanuri settlements is the placing of the butcher's section at the southwest side of a town or market so that the prevailing winds from
080 the northeast carry the odour away. Like other district capitals,

634 Like other district capitals,
[621] Magumeri's highest ranking person is the District Head. As a district
[368] capital it also contains a Junior Primary School, a court house, an infrequently used District Council House, and a district office in which the tax records are kept by a Chief Scribe. These features are shown in the diagram below.

• 361 Diagram Map of Magumeri Village
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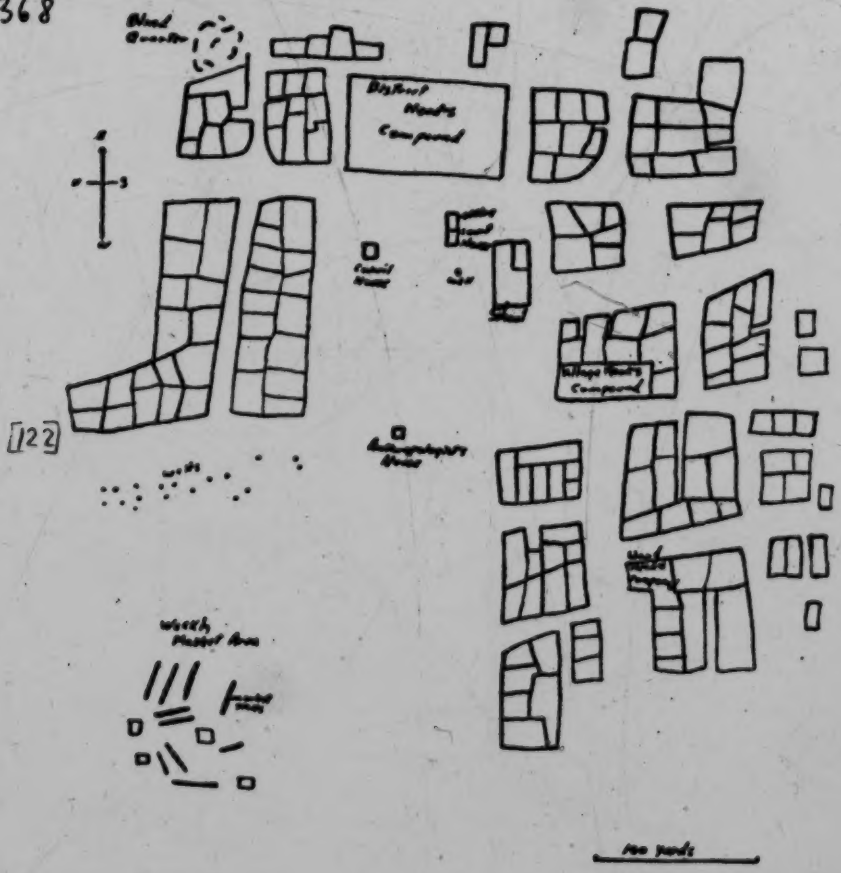

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642 However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the 15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali Ghajideni (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly [103] in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Yo • [361] (Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and Geidam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province. [648] His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north- [721] east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Borku and Tibesti in the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire 175 of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portugese cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma, for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe sometime around the beginning of the 17th century.(1) It is Idris who is supposed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area. However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century.(2)

[721] When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fighting increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have 174 fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.
(2) Bovill, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, p. 73

175 to Bello and complained that violence was being used for political
721 aggrandizement, not religious convension. Bello replied that the attacks were justified because of the oppression of the Fulani in Bornu, and the heathen practices of the Kanuri people, and because of aid given by Bornu to Kano and Katsina to resist the holy war.

Between 1809 and 1811 the capital fell again to the Fulani and was retaken a second time by Laminu for the Kanuri, but it was abandoned from this time forward as the center of the Bornu state. The results
175 of these few years were cataclysmic for the history of Bornu. The Fulani
178 invasion was halted, although the western vassals were now under the
727 sovereignty of the Fulani Empire of Sokoto. Bornu had survived the Jihad
643 (holy war), but at the cost of her famous capital of Birni Gazargamo, and the loss of a dynasty of rulers, the Magumi Sefuwa, who had retained the monarchy for 1000 years. For in appealing to Laminu for help, the Kanuri Mai triggered off the beginning of his and his family's end as the effective monarchs of Bornu, meanwhile initiating the beginning of the Kanembu dynasty which sits on the Bornu throne today.

175 The traditional Mai set up a new capital, called Kafela (open
643 place) near the present town of Monguno, and Laminu resided for a while at
[103] nearby Ngorno on the shores of Chad. However the constant threat of inun-
[361] dation from the Lake forced him to move his headquarters further inland to
[721] Kuka which became the 19th century center of the Bornu state. Ruling from behind the scenes, with the Mai still on the throne as a puppet, Laminu tried to re-consolidate the kingdom from 1820-35, by recapturing the western vassals, and even at one point (1826) by menacing Kano. It was during this period that Denham and Clapperton visited Bornu and in their publications we have a good record of the contemporary court life and politics of the kingdom, as well as some glimpses into the nature of everyday life in

175 In response to this constant warfare, villages in
361 danger would 29.
712 either build near hills, to which they would retire in case of attack, if they lived in the south, or hide the site in a bushy place with barricaded and camouflaged entrance paths to the town. They would often build large covered holes with spikes at the bottom to stop intruders, especially raiders on horseback. Again, many villages would construct large mud-stockaded walls for the same protective reason.

175 This pattern of constant warfare in Bornu is very old. The
721 contemporary record of the reign of Mai Idris Alooma, which has been pre-
178 served, is almost entirely an account of one military campaign after
175 another. Firearms have been used in Bornu for at least 400 years, and the
411 first request that Shehu Lamino made of the European explorers, who found
178 their way there in the 1820's, was for a cannon.(1) The interest in war-
175 fare by the leaders was reflected in the highly organized manner in which
726 warfare was conducted. Thus, before the battle witnessed by Denham, the
[701] Shehu inspected at military maneuvers of his troops. Each chief and slave commander (Kachella) had his own little "general staff" of close associates and when the order to advance on the enemy was given, each of these little "staffs" led their own groups forward. When the maneuvers were over, one of the groups was given the task for that day of watch and sentry duty for the entire camp.

173 Informants in Maiduguri recalled 24 Kachellas in pre-Rabeh
701 Bornu. Each had a "regiment" of cavalry and foot-soldiers, and the army was drawn into two divisions, under twelve Kachellas per unit. The first
[644] was called the "house" force. It generally remained close to the Shehu, and its soldiers constituted a standing army or palace guard whose primary duty was the protection of the monarchy. The second division was called the "bush" unit, not because it fought outside the capital, but rather be-

(1) Ibid., p. 149.

175 871 necessary to a growing administration. In Bornu, a provincial school was set up in Maiduguri in 1915 with eleven pupils which taught Hausa and Kanuri (using English script) and arithmetic.(1) Muslim religious knowledge and Arabic were also made part of the curriculum, while English did not come in until somewhat later. By 1916 there were 74 pupils all drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy.

According to the opinion of contemporary officials who have worked in several areas of northern Nigeria, European education in Bornu is far behind that of any other province in the region. Certainly most of the schools that can be seen today are usually less than 10 years old, so that education in the European sense of the word has only recently been made available in any appreciable extent to the people of Bornu. Today each District has at least one small elementary school and the provincial secondary school has been enlarged. 175 871 167 This dearth of western educated personnel has brought to Bornu many outsiders to fill the necessary jobs which the European and his record-keeping culture and technology require. Due to over-population and a much longer tradition of western education in their own area, a large number of these have been Ibo people from southeast Nigeria.

175 • 361 [132] In 1907 the British plan to rebuild the old 19th century capital of Kuka was abandoned due to the extreme aridity of the local area, and the capital was henceforth situated at Maiduguri on the Alo river basin. Kuka soon dwindled in size and became a rural village. 175 369 433 178 On the other hand, the new capital which had previously had a fairly large market could not produce enough grain to feed the suddenly expanded population which flowed in when it became the center of the Emirate. It was therefore found necessary from 1907 to 1914 to force

(1) Annual Report Bornu Province; 1915

595 iram to spouses living at that time in his compound. In addition he gives to his current wives presents of soap, perfume, clothes, etc. equal to about half the value of similar gifts given to the new bride. In practice this is extremely various, depending upon the wealth of the male, and his estimation of his present spouse(s)' potential jealousy and opposition over the new wife. One informant was observed who, after giving his wife a substantial cash gift (under half of the luwal-iram), matched the clothes given to his new bride one for one by gifts to his present wife. It is almost universally accepted that successive wives should be younger than one another. This is followed quite widely in practice, at least for the age difference between present wife (only one) and incoming wife. This insures that the authority and rank ordained by custom be represented by an age difference which always allows for a smoother operation of the principle that the wife already in the compound is kamu kura (senior wife).

595 632 162 [589] Frequency figures on polygyny from Magumeri town are atypical because of its position as District Headquarters. This means that a larger proportion of single males are present than is usual in rural areas, especially since Magumeri is one of the smaller District Headquarters, and the administrative personnel and their subordinates (these latter are often single young men) make up a larger element of [125] the population than is commonly the case. The following table on num- [361] ber of wives is taken from figures gathered between July and November of 1956,(1) given by 78 household heads in the towns of Magumeri, Chingowa, and Ngubura, which form a triangle to the south of Magumeri, each being

[585]

(1) Therefore these data were collected before the harvest of the 1956 crop which brings on the marrying season. The respondents ranged across an extremely wide range of occupations, but all kept up a compound and all worked farms near their towns.

595 632 162 [361] [366]

five to six miles from the other. Magumeri and Ngubura are market towns on the main road to the urban center, while Chingowa has no large weekly market and is off the motor road except for a few months in the wet season when its higher position on a ridge places it on the route of the rainy season road.

Frequency Distribution of Wives Among 78 Male Household Heads

Number of wives	0	1	2	3	4		
Number of males	6	33	31	5	3	Total	78 males
Total number of females	0	33	62	15	12	"	122 females

Thus a total of 78 males had between them 122 women as wives or an average of 1.56 women per man (polygynous households in sample = 50.0%).

595 [128]

Although it is probable in the extreme that many of the household heads questioned have since changed either the number and/or the persons of their wives, it is felt that this distribution is a representative and reliable description of Kanuri polygyny.

The quantitative data given gives strength to the qualitative observation that it is just as common to see a man with two wives as it [184] is with one in peasant households. This means that we may evaluate Kanuri polygyny as a well-integrated cultural element that is not only practiced by the wealthy and the powerful, but which has real meaning and behavioural consequences throughout all levels of the society.

593 In the marriage relationship itself, cultural tradition directs that the male play the dominant role. He gives his wife (or wives) their market money weekly, their millet for cooking from his granaries, and among high status persons, he usually keeps them secluded as much as possible in his compound. He supposedly makes the major decisions concerning himself, his wife and children, and their

Chapter VIII [p. 229]

Political Organization

631

The political organization in Bornu can be seen as a continuum of power and authority running from small to large scale structures. These include the extended household organization, the hamlet and ward, the village area, the district, and finally the state, which today has a place in the Northern Region and the Federation of Nigeria. [648] In Bornu, each expansion of the scale of the organization includes part or all of the previous one, while cross-cutting the entire system and intersecting it with varying intensities at different levels is the colonial administration.

621 The Hamlet and the Ward

Within the point of view of the present discussion the basic unit of political structure is the extended household organization [571] with its head as the primary governmental figure. The processes of fission and fusion by which these units expand or contract within themselves has already been described (see above pp. 80 - 92).

571 621 There is however a larger scaled process of fission and fusion which integrates that previously discussed with a wider political organization. This is the underlying process of Hamlet and Ward formation. The following examples illustrate this process in action.

• [361] [632] Approximately three miles south-west of Magumeri is the small village of Gworongo (pop. circa 250) which falls within the [249] administrative jurisdiction of the town area of Magumeri. Surrounding [276] the town are small plots of a specialized crop (gworongo)(1) which is sold [302] in the local markets along with tobacco flowers as a stimulant and a cosmetic for colouring women's teeth. In 1953 one of these full-time

(1) Solanacea Incanum

571 621 This same process has occurred at Fallatari, a tiny settlement of five interdependent households, one mile west of Magumeri. Here a semi-nomadic Fulani herdsman settled about 1947 with several brothers. They asked the permission of the Magumeri Village Area Head for this privilege before settling. They have some cows but are today primarily sedentary agriculturalists. The original brothers have now been joined by two strangers, also Fulani, and the settlement now has the political status of a Hamlet, with the original founder as the Ward or Hamlet Head -Bulama.

621 632 The political status of the first settlement still connects it in a subordinate manner to the parent Hamlet of Gworongo. All the people of Gworongo and those of the new settlement call themselves tala Lawan Minabe - the peasants of Lawan Mina - the Village Area Head [651] of Magumeri and its surrounding cluster of hamlets. The founder collects the taxes from the other males of the new settlement and gives it to the Village Head of Magumeri. He would rather take disputes with other community members to the Magumeri Village Area Head for adjud- 571 621 622 ication, than to the Hamlet Head of Gworogo and does so. As the years pass, and if the new settlement prospers and expands, bit by bit the founder or his heir in this embryo Hamlet will come to be identified as a Bulama (Hamlet Head). As long as people live in the settlement, the heir to the founder's compound will have the status of Hamlet Head and represent the little community as its political leader to those in the hierarchy above him. He will in turn be the instrument through which the political control of those below him is exerted by the wider political organization of the state.

361 In the following diagram of the new settlement near Gworongo, it should be noted that although the Hamlet-to-be has not yet taken on

[Text continues on p. 233]

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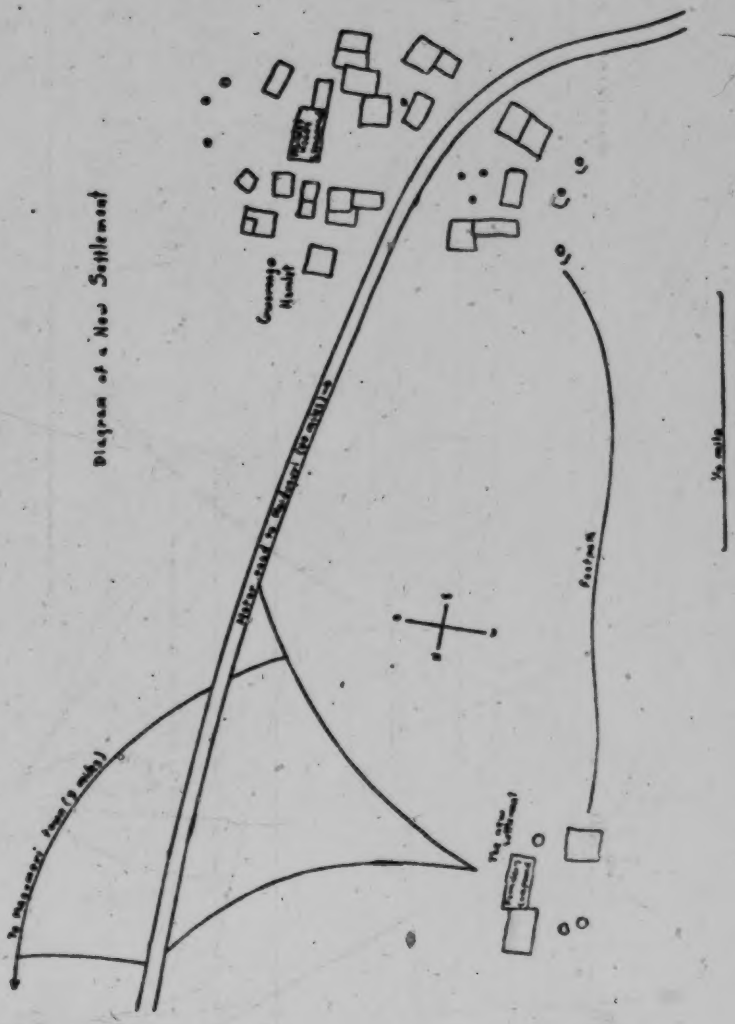

• 361 the typical U-shape of a Kanuri town, its embryonic form can be seen in the arrangement of the households, and as the founder claimed, if it continues to grow, the pattern will emerge more clearly.

571 632 621 The same process of establishing small jurisdictional units of political organization goes on in the larger towns within the wards. In Magumeri town, one ward (nguro) under its Bdlama is slowly approaching the condition where another Bdlama will be empowered and the ward split in two. It is now a large ward, of twenty-five households. Within this unit one man has his own organization of extended households. These include several of his younger brothers and sons with their wives and children. He collects taxes from all of these households and delivers it directly to the Village Area Head of Magumeri. However, he recognizes the authority of the present ward head in settling disputes and always consults the latter first, before taking a matter to any higher authority. One of his sons has married a girl from the household of the present ward head which also links the two organizations. However, if the smaller organization of households continues to expand as its senior man predicted it would, then he, and after him his heir, will eventually become the fully accepted heads of their own ward.

621 571 We can now explain more precisely what is meant in this study by the term extended household organization. It is based on or modelled after a patrilocal extended family organization, but may include non-kin members as well as kin who are all subordinated in some way to the authoritative head. At the local level, the term applies to a territorial unit of closely contiguous compounds each with its own head, but with some form of subordination to the organizational head of the larger unit. If the extended household head can maintain the